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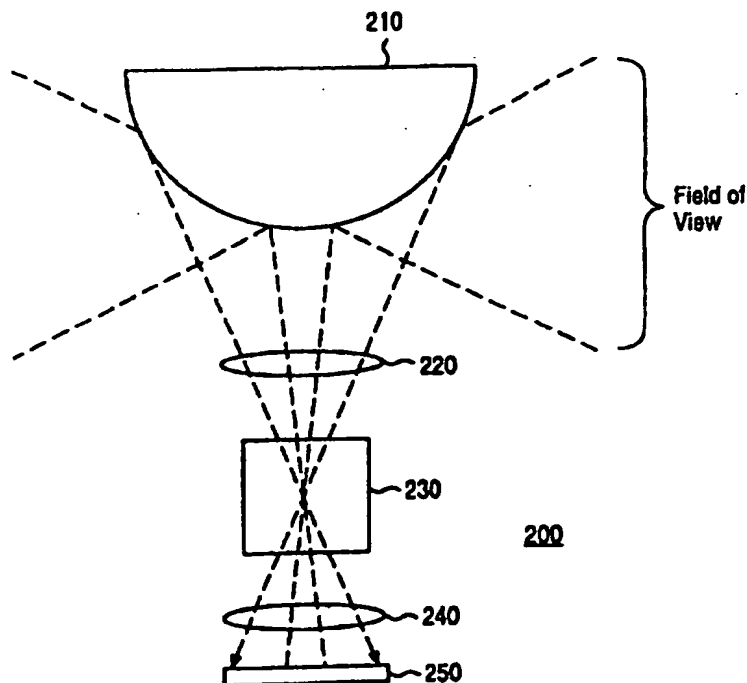
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(54) Title: PANORAMIC CAMERA

(57) Abstract

The invention is a new panoramic camera apparatus that instantaneously captures a 360 degree panoramic image. In one of the embodiments, the camera device comprises a convex mirror (210) for capturing light of the surrounding panorama, an astigmatic lens for correcting astigmatism, a camera objective lens (230) for converging light to a single point, a field flattening lens (240) for converting polar format images into two-dimensional planar images, and an image capture mechanism (250) for capturing optimized two-dimensional annular image of the surrounding panorama. The panoramic camera apparatus further includes various different systems for displaying and distributing the panoramic images. Specifically, these systems include means and method steps for digitally performing geometric transformation of the two-dimensional annular image into rectangular projections such that the panoramic image can be displayed using conventional methods such as printed images and televised images.



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Panoramic Camera

CLAIM OF PRIORITY

This application claims the benefit of the U.S. provisional patent application with serial number 60/020,292 that was filed on June 24, 1996.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of film and video photography. In particular the present invention discloses a camera device that captures a 360 degree panoramic image and display systems for displaying the panoramic image captured by the camera device.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Most cameras only provide a small viewing angle. Thus, a typical conventional camera only captures an image in the direction that the camera is aimed. Limited view cameras force viewers to look only at what the camera operator chooses to focus on. Some cameras use a specialized wide angle lens to capture a wider panoramic image, but such panoramic cameras still have a limited field of view.

It would be desirable to have a camera system that would capture the light from all directions such that a full 360 degree panoramic image can be created. A full 360 degree panoramic image would allow the viewer to choose what she would like to look at. Furthermore, a full 360 degree panoramic image allows multiple viewers to simultaneously view the world from the same point, with each being able to independently choose their viewing direction and field of view.

At the present time, there are some known methods of creating 360 degree panoramic images. However, most current methods are subject to limitations

due to their physical movements and mechanical complexity. For example, some of the current methods operate by combining a series of individual photographs taken in different directions into a single panoramic image. Some panoramic cameras spin a lens and film to capture a panoramic view in a single sweeping motion.

There is a market for panoramic photos to be used in multimedia applications, typically provided on CD-ROMs. In the last few years, some software manufacturers have introduced standards for digital storage and computer playback of panoramic datasets. One example is QuickTime® VR, introduced by Apple® Computer, Inc. Apple® Computer's QuickTime® VR standard governs the file storage format and the playback software needed to view their datasets.

Currently, Apple Computer recommends and provides software tools to implement a labor-intensive process for capturing these panoramic datasets. In the Apple QuickTime® VR (QTVR) process a standard 35mm camera is mounted vertically on a leveled tripod and equipped with an extreme wide angle lens (e.g. 15-18mm focal length). A sequence of twelve or more overlapping still photographs is taken at roughly 30 degree intervals as the camera is turned on the tripod around a vertical axis. These photographs are developed, digitized and then fed into a semi-automated software program called a "stitcher" that merges the overlapping still photographs into one long panoramic strip.

The labor intensive process suffers from a number of shortcomings. First, the process is time-consuming since many steps requiring human intervention and guidance. Furthermore, the recommended process is prone to temporal artifacts since it captures each individual photo at a different time. This means that the "stitched" pan image is not instantaneous but rather is made up of individual photos taken at different times. The time change during the series of photographs makes it nearly impossible to create panoramic images in changing scenes containing shorelines, urban crowds and traffic, windblown trees, etc. Finally, it is difficult to see how the image capture method recommended by Apple QuickTime® VR

(QTVR) can be extended from a single still panoramic image into a continuous frame, or motion picture panoramic image capture.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention discloses a camera device that instantaneously captures a 360 degree panoramic image. Furthermore, the present invention discloses various different systems for displaying the panoramic images.

In the camera device, virtually all of the light that converges on a point in space is captured. Specifically, in the camera of the present invention, light striking this point in space is captured if it comes from any direction, 360 degrees around the point and from angles 50 degrees or more above and below the horizon as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Other objects, features and advantages of present invention will be apparent from the company drawings and from the following detailed description that follows below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent to one skilled in the art, in view of the following detailed description in which:

Figure 1 illustrates the panoramic surroundings that are captured by the panoramic camera system of the present invention.

Figure 2a illustrates a schematic diagram of the panoramic camera system of the present invention.

Figure 2b illustrates a schematic diagram of the panoramic camera system of the present invention with a parabolic mirror.

Figure 2c illustrates an annular image captured by the panoramic camera system of the **Figure 2b** wherein the incident angle is linearly proportional to the radial distance of the annular image .

Figure 3a illustrates an example of an annular image captured by the panoramic camera system of the present invention.

Figure 3b illustrates a rectangular panoramic image after the captured annular image is transformed from polar coordinates to rectangular coordinates.

Figure 4a illustrates photographic film used to capture the annular panoramic image.

Figure 4b illustrates a Charged Coupled Device array used to capture the annular panoramic image.

Figure 5 illustrates an alternate embodiment of the camera system of the present invention wherein a beam splitter is used to allow the annular image to be captured on two image planes.

Figure 6a illustrates a first embodiment of two image planes used to capture different portions of a single annular panoramic image.

Figure 6b illustrates a second embodiment of two image planes used to capture different portions of a single annular panoramic image.

Figure 7 illustrates an embodiment of the panoramic camera wherein some of the optical elements are housed within the parabolic mirror.

Figure 8a illustrates a first embodiment of the panoramic camera that uses a solid transparent block to surround the parabolic mirror.

Figure 8b illustrates a second embodiment that uses a solid transparent block to surround the parabolic mirror which houses other optical elements.

Figure 9a illustrates an embodiment that panoramic camera that supports the convex mirror with a central post that is out of the annular field of view.

Figure 9b illustrates an embodiment that panoramic camera that divides the convex mirror in quarters and supports the mirror using posts between the four quarters.

Figure 10 graphically illustrates how the annular image is sample to product a rectangular panoramic image.

Figure 11a graphically illustrates how an image is stored in Apple® Computer's QuickTime® VR format.

Figure 11b graphically illustrates how viewports are created from Apple® Computer's QuickTime® VR format.

Figure 11c illustrates a flow chart that lists how the panoramic camera system can be used to create images in Apple® Computer's QuickTime® VR format.

Figure 12 illustrates a graphical user interface for a client program used to view panoramic still images created by the panoramic camera system.

Figure 13a illustrates a graphical user interface for a client program used to view panoramic video created by the panoramic camera system.

Figure 13b illustrates a networked computer arrangement used to view panoramic video created by the panoramic camera system.

Figure 14a illustrates a side view of one embodiment of the panoramic camera system that includes microphones.

Figure 14b illustrates a side view of one embodiment of the panoramic camera system that includes microphones.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

A method and apparatus for a camera device that instantaneously captures 360 degree panoramic images is disclosed. In the following description, for purposes of explanation, specific nomenclature is set forth to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it will be apparent to one skilled in the art that these specific details are not required in order to practice the present invention. For example, the present invention has been described with reference to Charge Coupled Devices. However, the panoramic camera system can easily be implemented with other types of electronic image capture systems.

The Basic Panoramic Camera Design

The panoramic camera design of the present invention captures light from all directions within 50 to 60 degrees above and below the horizon simultaneously. **Figure 1** graphically illustrates the cylindrical panoramic view of which the panoramic camera system captures an image. To capture all the light of the panorama and generate a two dimensional representation that may easily be recorded, the present invention uses a carefully designed and engineered collection of mirrors and lenses. The basic design of the panoramic camera of the present invention is illustrated in **Figure 2a**. Each element of the panoramic camera will be described individually.

The Mirror

Referring to **Figure 2a**, the panoramic camera of the present invention collects light using a convex mirror **210** that is in the approximate shape of parabolic cone. In one embodiment of the present invention, the tip of the convex mirror **210** is pointed downward as illustrated in **Figure 2a**. When the convex mirror **210** is viewed from below, the parabolic mirror **210** presents an annular image of the surrounding panorama as illustrated in **Figure 3a**. However, the annular image is distorted and suffers from optical defects due to the shape of the convex mirror **210**.

The distortion in the image is partly due to the fact that the convex mirror **210** of the imaging system effectively converts the surrounding panorama to a polar coordinate system. By adjusting the shape of the convex mirror **210**, the mapping of the elevation angle of incoming light to radial distance in the annular image, can be controlled.

In a preferred embodiment, the convex mirror **210** is a parabolic mirror that creates an annular image wherein the radial distance from the center of the annual image is linearly proportional to the angle of incident light. A panoramic camera system with a parabolic mirror is illustrated in **Figure 2b**. Note that in the image plane of **Figure 2b**, the distance from the center is linearly proportional to the angle of incident light. This concept is more clearly illustrated in **Figure 3c**, wherein the concentric circles represent different angles of incident light.

The Astigmatism Correction Lens

The convex mirror of the present invention introduces other image defects that require careful correction. One particular problem is astigmatism. Specifically, the light reflected downward from the convex mirror **210** of the present invention will not meet at a single focal point. To correct for this problem, an astigmatism correction lens **220** is added to correctly focus the light from the convex mirror **210**.

The astigmatism correction lens **220** comprises a group of 2 or more lenses whose group focal length is long but with individual elements of strong and opposite power. Thus, the astigmatism lens group may be made of the same optical material without introducing significant lateral color. Since the beam size associated with any object point in space to be imaged is quite small compared to the field of the beam, the strong elements tend to introduce deleterious amounts of spherical aberration or coma into the final image.

The Objective Lens

The next component is a standard camera objective lens 230. The standard camera objective lens 230 forms an image using the astigmatism-corrected, reflected light from the convex mirror 210. In the present embodiment, a standard off-the-shelf camera lenses, that are optimized for cost and performance in the conventional photography market. The current embodiment relies upon a pre-defined focal length.

The focal length of the standard objective lens is selected based on two factors. The first factor is the maximum angular field of view present by the convex mirror and astigmatism correction lens group. This factor is determined by the largest angle away from the horizon of an object to be captured. The second factor is the maximum diameter of the circular image to be recorded. In an embodiment that uses 35mm film, this value would not exceed 24mm. In an embodiment that uses Charged Coupled Device arrays, the objective lens must keep the circular image within the bounds of the CCD array.

For one preferred embodiment, the appropriate focal length is 22 mm. Since there are many objective lenses available with focal lengths in the 18 mm to 24mm range, this focal length provides many off-the-shelf lens choices.

To allow a standard off-the-shelf camera lens to be used, the present invention "false focuses" the image beyond the normal focal plane. This allows the next optical element (field flattening lens) to fit between the objective lens 230 and the image plane.

The Field Flattening Lens

Another optical problem created by the parabolic mirror is a curved image field that is created by the curve of the parabolic mirror. The curved image field problem is solved by add yet another lens 240. This final lens is a "field flattening" lens, that flattens the field of optimal focus to a flat two dimensional

image plane. The field flattening lens **240** must be kept as close to the image plane as practical to eliminate the need for a focal plane shutter.

In one embodiment, the material SFL6 is used to create the field flattening lens **240**. Due to its high index of refraction, SFL6 allows the field flattening lens **240** to be approximately 2 millimeters thick. If the field flattening lens **240** was created using more traditional materials, the field flattening lens **240** would be approximately 4.5 millimeters thick.

The Image Capture System

The final major component of the panoramic camera design is the image capture mechanism **250**. The image capture mechanism **250** is placed at the image plane just beneath the field flattening lens **240**. This mechanism captures the optimized two dimensional annular image of the surrounding panorama. An example of a captured panorama stored as a two dimensional annular representation is shown in **Figure 3a**.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the image capture mechanism can be a frame of photographic film as illustrated in **Figure 4a**. Using convention photography techniques, several successive frames can be used to record series of images. The series of images may be several distinct still images taken from different locations. Alternatively, the series of images may be a set of successive images recorded used to create a panoramic motion picture. The image that is recorded onto photographic film is then later converted into a digital image for digital image processing as will be described in later sections of this document.

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, a high resolution digital image capture system is used to capture the annular image created by the optical elements. In one embodiment of the present invention a Charged Coupled Device (CCD) array **450** is placed in the image plane to capture the image as illustrated in **Figure 4b**. Control circuitry **460** coupled to the CCD array **450** captures the image directly into a digital format. The use of a digital image capture

system allows an immediate read-out of the digitized raw annular image. The digitized raw annular image can be stored into a storage device **470** such as flash memory or a hard disk drive. The CCD array **450** may be color (RGB) or black & white, depending on the intended application.

To generate an annular image of sufficient quality to be used in the Apple QuickTime® VR market, it has been determined that the image plane must be sampled with an array having at least 2K by 2K elements. To meet this requirement, one embodiment of the present invention uses a CCD array produced by Loral-Fairchild, Inc. However, the high resolution CCD array sold by Loral-Fairchild, Inc. adds a significant cost to the panoramic camera of the present invention. Furthermore, large CCD arrays such as the Loral-Fairchild array have difficulty handling the extreme differences in light intensity that are produced optical system of the present invention. Specifically, one area of the image may have direct sunlight and other areas may receive comparatively little light.

To reduce the production cost of the panoramic camera, alternate embodiments of the present invention use a set of lower resolution CCD arrays. Specifically, consumer grade CCD devices that are targeted at the consumer electronics market are used. Consumer electronics grade CCD arrays have the distinct advantages of lower cost, more highly-integrated support circuitry availability, high speed read-out, robustness to extreme lighting and other environmental conditions.

No individual consumer grade CCD array meets the high resolution requirements needed by the present invention (at least 2K by 2K elements). Therefore, a method of obtaining a greater image resolution is required if consumer grade CCDs are used.

One method of creating an acceptable image capture mechanism using consumer grade CCD arrays is to use multiple low resolution CCD chips to cover the image plane using a mosaic pattern. Referring to **Figure 5**, the basic

panoramic camera configuration described in the previous sections is illustrated except the last stage has an added beam-splitter **545** that directs a second image to a second field flattening lens **541** and a second image plane **551**. The beam-splitter **545** may comprise a half-silvered mirror or a prism arrangement as is known in the art. The two image planes (image plane **551** and image plane **553**) each capture a portion of the whole annular image. To construct a complete image, the camera optically composites the images from the two different image planes into a single image.

Figure 6a and **6b** each illustrate one possible embodiment of the dual image plane image capture system. **Figure 6a** illustrates a mosaic pattern create with four consumer grade CCD devices. As illustrated in **Figure 6a**, the two image planes capture the whole annular image while each image plane leaves room for the chip lead frames and support circuitry. **Figure 6b** illustrates an alternate embodiment that six consumer grade CCD devices. An additional advantage of this scheme is that the CCD array chips can potentially share some supporting circuitry since the signals each independent chip is requiring are often identical.

A disadvantage of the mosaic technique is the image capture variation that will exists between the different CCD chips. The image variation can be compensated for by having overlapping CCD array coverage. The overlapping area is used to cross calibrate the image variation between adjacent CCD arrays.

Folded Optics Configuration

Figure 7 illustrates an alternative embodiment of the panoramic camera system. In the embodiment of **Figure 7**, the camera subassembly is housed within the parabolic mirror. Referring to **Figure 7**, the convex mirror **710** is inverted and a hole is cut into the tip. A second mirror **715** is placed above the convex mirror **710**, directing the light from the surrounding panorama into the hole in the top of the convex mirror **710**. The remainder of the optical path, including the astigmatism correction lens **720**, the objective lens **730**, the field flattening lens **740**, and the image capture mechanism **750**, are all housed inside the inverted convex

mirror 710. It is apparent from the diagram of Figure 7 that the "folded optics" configuration protects the optical path and mechanical parts of the panoramic camera system.

Transparent Block Configuration

Another alternative embodiment is shown in Figure 8a. In this alternative, the convex mirror is formed as the internal space of a curved block of transparent material such as glass or plastic. The mirror surface 810 is formed by the inner surface of hole that is milled or cast in the top of the transparent material 805. The shape of the outer surface approximates a sphere centered on the virtual focal point of the convex mirror 810. The outer surface of the transparent material is a polished surface that forms the outside skin of the camera. The bottom tip of the transparent block is optically mated to the other optical parts of the camera system. The bottom tip may be polished flat or molded into a shape that contributes to the astigmatism lens group.

The solid transparent block approach has a number of significant advantages. First, the mirrored inner surface of the transparent block material can be well protected. This technique overcomes the disadvantages of front surface mirrors. Specifically, when front surface mirrors are exposed to the outside world they are susceptible to damage and degradation. In the above described embodiment, the mirrored surface is fully protected since it is encased between a protective backing material and the transparent block material. Another advantage of the solid block approach is that the skin of the camera is incorporate into the optical system. Thus only one surface would need to be multicoated to prevent internal reflections.

The transparent block technique can also be implement using the folded optics scheme described in the previous section. Specifically, Figure 8b illustrates an inverted solid transparent block used to implement a panoramic camera system. In this case, the camera components are contained within the mirror cavity. Note that the outside surface at the top of the block is no longer an exit path bus is

instead a mirrored surface that directs the image light down into an optical path inside the parabolic block.

Different methods can be used to construct a transparent block panoramic camera system. One method would be to create the transparent block, then polish the transparent block, and finally add a mirrored surface where appropriate. An alternate method of constructing a transparent block panoramic camera system would start with the convex mirror. Then, the convex mirror would be encapsulated within the transparent block. This method would be simpler to construct since a concave surface would not require polishing. Furthermore, the convex mirror would be protected by the transparent block.

Center Support Configuration

Another alternative embodiment addresses the problem of how to align and support the optical elements of the panoramic camera illustrated in **Figure 2a**. It is possible to use the protective, transparent block technique as described in the previous section to provide structure, stability and alignment. However, the transparent block technique requires multicoating of the surfaces or else undesired internal reflections will be visible. **Figure 9a** discloses an alternate embodiment wherein a central post **903** is used to support the parabolic mirror **910**. The remainder of the optical system is below the parabolic mirror **910** and the central post **903**. The center support scheme takes advantage of the fact that the center of the annular image is discarded since it contains only an image of the camera itself. Therefore, the center portion of the annular image can be used for support of the parabolic mirror **910**.

External Support Configuration

Another scheme for supporting the parabolic mirror above the optical elements below is to use several side supports. This can be accomplished by splitting the parabolic mirror into "pie-pieces" by cutting the parabolic mirror after fabrication. For example, the parabolic mirror can be quartered as illustrated in **Figure 9b**. The four sections of parabolic mirror **1021**, **1022**, **1023**, and **1024** can be

spread apart slightly, allowing for the introduction of supporting elements 1031, 1032, 1033, and 1034 that will not obstruct the fields of view.

If the parabolic mirror is split into four sections, then annular image will appear as four quadrants at the image plane. To correct for this, the gaps can be removed during the polar-to-rectangular coordinate conversion, thereby restoring the continuity of the panoramic image. The gaps between the mirror sections should be kept as small as possible, however, since the optical system is degraded by the loss of rotational symmetry.

Panoramic Image Presentation

As illustrated in **Figure 3a**, the panoramic camera system of the present invention records a two dimensional annular representation of the surrounding panorama. However, the annular representation is not of much interest to most viewers. Therefore, to display the panoramic images captured by the panoramic camera of the present invention, several different display systems are disclosed.

Still image presentation as a rectangular panoramic image

The most common method of displaying a panoramic image is to display the image as a rectangle where the horizontal direction represents the view angle. An example of this type of panoramic image presentation is illustrated in **Figure 3b**. Such rectangular panoramic images are commonly displayed in nature magazines. As stated in the background, the prior art method of creating such rectangular panoramic images was to take several convention photographs at different angles and then stitch those photographs together somehow.

With the panoramic camera system of the present invention, such rectangular panoramic images can easily be created. First the panoramic camera system of the present invention is used to capture an annular image of the surrounding panorama. Then the annular image is digitized and loaded into a

computer system. (The image will already be in digital form if a CCD version of the panoramic camera system was used to capture the image.)

A custom conversion program is then executed on the computer system. The custom conversion program scans around the annular image starting at an arbitrarily chosen sampling line 310. Points along the sampling line 310 are sampled and then their position changed using polar coordinate to rectangular coordinate conversion. **Figure 10** illustrates how two different points on the annular image are sampled and then placed into rectangular coordinates. As illustrated in **Figure 10**, the orientation of the sampling pattern changes as the coordinate transform program rotates around the annular image. The resulting rectangular image is illustrated in **Figure 3b**.

While sampling the annular image, it is important to sample the image differently depending on where the annular image is being sampled. The following three rules must be observed:

1. The sampling shape is dynamically changing depending on the viewing angle (both in the horizontal and vertical).
2. The sampling shape size proportional to the radius (vertical viewing angle); and
3. The sampling shape orientation is different depending on the horizontal viewing angle .

Since there is a greater resolution around the outer perimeter of the annular image, the corresponding rectangular image portion will have better image clarity. The outer perimeter of the annular image may be the top or the bottom of the rectangular image depending on the optical path. (Compare **Figure 2a** with **Figure 7**). In **Figure 10**, the lower portion of the rectangular image will have a better image clarity since it is from the outer perimeter of the annular image. One embodiment of the present invention takes advantage of this fact by using the outer perimeter of the annular image for the ground since the ground in a panoramic scene is generally more detailed than the sky.

Once the panoramic image has been converted from an annular image to a rectangular image on a computer system, then the rectangular image can be presented to viewers in a number of different formats. For example, the rectangular image may be distributed electronically as a JPEG image and viewed with JPEG image viewers. Alternatively, the rectangular image can be printed out with a color printer. It should be noted that since the rectangular image is in digital form, it can quickly be added to a publication being created with a Desktop Publishing Layout Program such as QuarkXpress or Adobe's PageMaker.

Image presentation as a Virtual Reality image

Apple Computer introduced a standard known as QuickTime® VR for storing and displaying virtual reality images. Apple Computer's QuickTime® VR standard governs the data storage format and the playback software needed to view the QuickTime® VR datasets. The camera system of the present invention can be used to quickly create QuickTime® VR datasets.

The QuickTime® VR format stores the image as cylindrical image as illustrated in **Figure 11a**. Specifically, the viewpoint is at the center of the cylinder and the inner surface of the cylinder represents the stored QuickTime® VR image. Note that trapezoid shaped patches must be sampled to generate an image if the user is looking up or down as illustrated in **Figure 11b**.

Figure 11c illustrates a flow diagram that lists the steps required to produce a QuickTime® VR dataset using the panoramic camera system of the present invention. First, at **step 1110**, a panoramic image is recorded with the panoramic camera. Then, at **step 1120**, the recorded image is digitized and loaded into a computer system. If the panoramic camera recorded the image on a piece of film, then a print of the film can be scanned into the computer system using a flatbed scanner. Alternatively, a film image can be commercially transformed into the well known PhotoCD® format produced by Kodak®. If the panoramic camera recorded the image with a CCD array and stored the image digitally, then the digital image is

just copied from the camera's storage system into the computer system's storage system.

After the digital version of the annular image is available on the computer system, a transformation program is then executed on the computer system at **step 1130** in order to transform the digitized annular image into a QuickTime® VR dataset. The annular image produced by the camera system of the present invention stores the panoramic image information in a polar coordinate system. Conversely, Apple®'s QuickTime® VR uses a cylindrical coordinate system as illustrated in **Figure 11a**. Thus, the transformation program converts the annular image from its polar coordinate system into the QuickTime® VR cylindrical coordinate system. After transforming the image into the QuickTime® VR cylindrical coordinate system, then a file is created using the QuickTime® VR file format at **step 1135**.

Once the coordinate transform is complete, the transformed image can be view using Apple's QTVR player program as stated in **step 1140**.

Still image presentation on a computer network

Since the present invention can store the annular image in digital form, a very useful method of distributing panoramic images is through a computer network. In particular, the hypertext transport protocol (http) of the World Wide Web (WWW) on the Internet can be used to distribute still annular images. The still annular images would be stored on a World Wide Web server. To access the still annular images, any user coupled to the Internet would use a World Wide Web browser program.

One method of transporting the images would be to define a new panoramic image annular data format. The images could then be downloaded as stored in the panoramic image annular data format. A helper application would then display the images once downloaded.

A better method of displaying images using the hypertext transport protocol (http) of the World Wide Web (WWW) would be to implement a "plug-in" application that would work with the browser program. **Figure 12** illustrates a graphical user interface for one possible client panoramic image presentations system. On the right side of **Figure 12**, a set of different panoramic images to display is available. To display one of those images, the user selects the image with a cursor control device. On the upper left of the graphical user interface of **Figure 12** is viewport for displaying a portion of a panoramic image. Pan arrows on either side of the viewport allow the user to pan left and right.

Image Presentation As Video

One of the most interesting presentation systems for the present invention is a video presentation system. **Figures 13a and 13b** illustrate one possible video presentation system.

Referring to **Figure 13a**, a CCD version of the panoramic camera system **1205** of the present invention is illustrated coupled to a computer system **1200**. The CCD version of the panoramic camera system **1205** is coupled through a panoramic camera interface **1210**. The panoramic camera interface **1210** receives a digital stream of annular images. To interface with computer systems, one embodiment of the panoramic camera interface **1210** is the FireWire system that is described in the IEEE 1394 standard.

After being received through the panoramic camera interface **1210**, the digitized annular images are stored in an Annular "Video" Storage system **1230**. The Annular "Video" comprises a series of a consecutive annular images taken with a CCD version of the panoramic camera system **1205**.

To display the Annular Video as normal video, the annular frames must be converted from the annular image format into normal video images. In one embodiment of the present invention, only a portion of the annular image is converted into normal video. One reason for this is that the aspect ratio of video

does not allow for good viewing of wide but short rectangular panoramic images. Furthermore, by only transforming a portion of the annular image into normal video, the transformation can be done in real-time without requiring exceedingly fast computer equipment. The transformation of annular video to normal video is done by annular to video conversion units **1240** and **1243**.

To display the normal video, existing video streaming software **1260** and **1263** can be used. For example, using a standard transmission protocol like MPEG or a proprietary protocols such as StreamWorks produced by Xing Technology Corporation of Arroyo Grande, California or VDOLive produced by VDOnet Corporation of Santa Clara, California, the video can be provided to computer users coupled to a network.

Figure 13b illustrates one possible embodiment of a graphical user interface (GUI) for accessing the annular video. In the GUI of **Figure 13b**, a video viewport **1340** is used to display the video. A smaller still panoramic image **1310** is used to illustrate a static version of the full panoramic video. A locator window **1315** is used to identify the view angle that the video window **1340** is displaying within the full panoramic view that is available.

To change the view angle, the user can select a pan right arrow **1347** or a pan left arrow **1343** with a cursor **1320**. Alternatively, the user can simply move the position of the locator window **1315** within the still panoramic image **1310**. In the embodiment of **Figure 13b**, the entire vertical image aspect of the image is compressed into the video viewport **1340**, however in other embodiments the ,

Referring back to **Figure 13a**, user input processing routines **1250** and **1253** processing the user's commands. When a the user requests a viewpoint change, the new viewpoint is communicated to the respective annular to video conversion units **1240** or **1243** such that it will begin converting images from the new user viewpoint. In an alternate embodiment, the user input processing routines

are place within the client program on the client computer system. For example, in an embodiment of a WWW browser program, a plug-in program can process the user commands and simply pass the location of the video viewport to the server.

Referring back to **Figure 13b**, a parameter window **1350** is also available to the viewer. The parameter window **1350** allows the user to adjust some of the viewing parameters such as Image Brightness **1352**, Image Tint **1353** and Image Contrast **1355**. When a user adjusts these parameters, the changes will be processed by the user input processing routines **1250** and **1253** provided to the annular to video conversion units **1240** or **1243** or the video streaming software **1260** or **1263** such that video quality is changed.

Telepresence: Video and Audio

To more completely convey the experience of being at a different location, the present invention can be combined with a three dimensional sound system. Referring to **Figures 14a** and **14b**, an embodiment of the camera system is illustrated with four directional microphones **1441**, **1442**, **1443**, and **1444**. The four directional microphones **1441**, **1442**, **1443**, and **1444** capture sound emanating from four cardinal directions.

To add three dimensional sound, the sound from the various directional microphones is mixed depending on the viewing angle that a user has selected. For example, if a viewer that is seeing a real-time image from camera **1400** of **Figure 14a** is viewing straight out of the page, then the left speaker will receive information from microphone **1443** and the right speaker will receive information from microphone **1441**. The sound can be provided to users on a computer network using audio streaming software such as RealAudio by Progressive Networks, Inc. As the viewer adjusts the viewing angle, the sound from the directional microphones will be adjusted accordingly.

By adding sound to the system, the user is provided with a cues as to which direction they should be viewing. For example, if the user hears a sound from "behind", then the user can change the view angle to look backward.

The foregoing has described a camera device that captures 360 degree panoramic images and presentation systems for displaying such images. It is contemplated that changes and modifications may be made by one of ordinary skill in the art, to the materials and arrangements of elements of the present invention without departing from the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. An apparatus for capturing panoramic images, said apparatus comprising:
 - a convex mirror, said convex mirror reflecting light from 360 degrees around said convex mirror;
 - an astigmatism correction lens, said astigmatism correction lens correcting astigmatism in said light reflected from said convex mirror;
 - an objective lens for focusing said light reflected from said convex mirror;
 - and
 - an image capture mechanism, said image capture mechanism capturing said light reflected from said convex mirror.
2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 further comprising:
 - a field flattening lens, said field flattening lens flattening a field of optimal focus.
3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein image capture mechanism comprises photographic film.
4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein image capture mechanism comprises an electronic image capture mechanism.
5. The apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein said electronic image capture mechanism comprises a charged coupled device array.

6. An apparatus for capturing panoramic images, said apparatus comprising:

a convex mirror, said convex mirror reflecting light from 360 degrees around said convex mirror;
an objective lens for focusing said light reflected from said convex mirror;
a field flattening lens, said field flattening lens flattening a field of optimal focus; and
an image capture mechanism, said image capture mechanism capturing said light reflected from said convex mirror.

7. The apparatus as claimed in claim 6 wherein image capture mechanism comprises photographic film.

8. The apparatus as claimed in claim 6 wherein image capture mechanism is housed within .

9. The apparatus as claimed in claim 8 wherein said image capture mechanism comprises an electronic image capture device.

10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 8 wherein said electronic image capture device comprises at least one charged coupled device.

11. An apparatus for capturing panoramic images, said apparatus comprising:

a convex mirror, said convex mirror reflecting light from a 360 degree band around said convex mirror, said 360 degree band having a horizon line;
and
an image capture mechanism, said image capture mechanism capturing an annular shaped image created by said light reflected from said convex mirror;
wherein said convex mirror is shaped such that an angle of elevation from said horizon line is linearly proportional to a radial distance of the center of said annular shaped image.

12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 further comprising:
a field flattening lens, said field flattening lens flattening a field of optimal focus.

13. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 further comprising:
an astigmatism correction lens, said astigmatism correction lens correcting astigmatism in said light reflected from said convex mirror.

14. An apparatus for capturing panoramic images, said apparatus comprising:
a convex mirror, said convex mirror reflecting light from a 360 degree band around said convex mirror, said 360 degree band having a horizon line;
a beam splitter, said beam splitter dividing said reflected light into a first annular image and a second annular image;
a first electronic image capture mechanism, said first electronic image capture mechanism capturing at least half of said first annular image created by said light reflected from said convex mirror; and

a second electronic image capture mechanism, said second electronic image capture mechanism capturing at least half of said second annular image created by said light reflected from said convex mirror.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 14 wherein said first electronic image capture mechanism and said second electronic image capture mechanism comprise charged coupled devices.

16. An apparatus for capturing panoramic images, said apparatus comprising:

- a convex mirror, said convex mirror reflecting light from a 360 degree band around said convex mirror;
- a second mirror, said second mirror reflecting said light from said convex mirror into an aperture in said convex mirror; and
- an image capture mechanism, said image capture mechanism capturing said light reflected from said convex mirror and said second mirror.

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 16 wherein said image capture mechanism is housed within said convex mirror.

18. A panoramic camera apparatus, said panoramic camera apparatus comprising:

- an image capture mechanism;
- a main reflector, said main reflector reflecting light from a 360 degree panorama onto said image capture mechanism; and
- a protective transparent block; said protective transparent block covering said main reflector.

19. The apparatus as claimed in claim 18 wherein said protective transparent block is shaped such that light rays that will be reflected onto said image capture mechanism enter said protective transparent case at a normal to the surface of said protective transparent block.

20. The apparatus as claimed in claim 18 further comprising:
a second reflector, said second reflector reflecting light from said main reflector down through an opening in said main reflector.

21. The apparatus as claimed in claim 20 wherein said protective transparent block ends at said opening in said main reflector.

22. The apparatus as claimed in claim 20 wherein an lens system is housed within an indentation of said protective transparent block.

23. A method of recording a panorama, said method comprising the steps of:
reflecting light from a 360 degree band around a convex mirror to an image plane;
correcting astigmatism in said light reflected from said convex mirror; and
capturing an annular representation of said panorama on said image plane with an image capture mechanism.

24. A method of recording a panorama, said method comprising the steps of:

reflecting light from a 360 degree band around a convex mirror to an image plane;
flattening a field of optimal focus for said reflected light; and
capturing an annular representation of said panorama on said image plane with an image capture mechanism.

25. The method as claimed in claim 24 further comprising:
correcting astigmatism in said light reflected from said convex mirror.

26. The method as claimed in claim 24 wherein said step of capturing an annular representation comprises capturing an annular image on photographic film.

27. The method as claimed in claim 24 wherein said step of capturing an annular representation comprises capturing an annular image on a charged coupled device array.

28. The method as claimed in claim 24 further comprising:
focusing said light reflected from said convex mirror with an objective lens.

29. A method of presenting panoramic images, said method comprising the steps of:
recording an annular representation of a panorama;
storing said annular representation of said panorama as a digitized annular representation;
geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation of said panorama into a rectangular projection of said panorama; and

displaying said rectangular projection of said panorama.

30. The method as claimed in claim 29 wherein said step of mathematical transforming further comprises sampling said digitized annular representation with a dynamically changing sampling shape wherein said sampling shape is dependent upon a viewing angle.

31. The method as claimed in claim 29 wherein said step of geometrically transforming further comprises sampling said digitized annular representation with a dynamically changing sampling shape orientation wherein said sampling shape orientation is dependent upon a horizontal viewing angle.

32. A method of presenting panoramic images, said method comprising the steps of:
recording an annular representation of a panorama;
storing said annular representation of said panorama as a digitized annular representation;
geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation of said panorama into a cylindrical representation of said panorama; and
displaying said cylindrical representation of said panorama using a computer program.

33. The method as claimed in claim 32 wherein said step of displaying said cylindrical representation of said panorama using a computer program comprises running a QuickTime VR program.

34. A method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location, said method comprising the steps of:
capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
transmitting said digitized annular representation to a local computer;
geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation into a rectangular projection of said panorama using said local computer; and
displaying said rectangular projection of said panorama.

35. A method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location, said method comprising the steps of:
capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation into a rectangular representation of said panorama;
transmitting said rectangular representation of said panorama to a local receiver; and
displaying said rectangular representation of said panorama on said local receiver.

36. The method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location as claimed in claim 35 wherein said step of geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation into a rectangular representation of said panorama comprises geometrically transforming a portion of said digitized annular representation into rectangular projection.

37. The method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location as claimed in claim 36 further comprising the steps of:
transmitting a request from said local receiver to said remote location; and

selecting said portion of said digitized annular representation dependent upon said request.

38. A method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location, said method comprising the steps of:
capturing a digitized annular frame of a panorama at said remote location;
geometrically transforming said digitized annular frame into a rectangular projection frame of said panorama;
transmitting said rectangular projection frame of said panorama to a local receiver;
displaying said rectangular representation of said panorama on said local receiver;
capturing a stream of digitized annular frames of a panorama at said remote location;
geometrically transforming a particular portion of said stream of digitized annular frames into a stream of rectangular projection frames; and
displaying said stream of rectangular projection frames on said local receiver.

39. The method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the steps of:
transmitting a request from said local receiver to said remote location; and
selecting said particular portion of said digitized annular representation dependent upon said request.

40. The method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the steps of:
capturing audio at said remote location; and
transmitting said audio to said local receiver.

41. A method of presenting images from a remote location, said method comprising the steps of:

- capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
- geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation into a rectangular representation of said panorama;
- selecting a viewport from said rectangular representation of said panorama;
- transmitting said viewport from said rectangular representation of said panorama to a local receiver; and
- displaying said viewport on said local receiver.

42. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 41, said method further comprising the steps of:

- capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location;
- transmitting said audio stream to said local receiver; and
- generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

43. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 41 wherein said steps are repeated such that said viewport on said local receiver comprises a motion image.

44. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 41 wherein said step of capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location comprises , said method further comprising the steps of:

- capturing multiple directional audio sources;
- mixing said multiple directional audio sources based upon said selected viewport to create a mixed audio stream ;

transmitting said audio stream to said local receiver; and
generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

45. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 41, said method further comprising the steps of:
transmitting at least one command from said local receiver to said remote location; and
selecting said viewport dependent upon said command.

46. A method of presenting panoramic images of a remote location, said method comprising the steps of:
capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
selecting a viewport from said digitized annular representation of said panorama;
geometrically transforming said selected viewport from said digitized annular representation into a rectangular representation of said viewport;
transmitting said rectangular representation of said viewport to a local computer; and
displaying said rectangular representation of said viewport on said local computer.

47. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 46 wherein said steps are repeated such that said viewport on said local receiver comprises a motion image.

48. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 46, said method further comprising the steps of:

capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location;
transmitting said audio stream to said local receiver; and
generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

49. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 46 wherein said step of capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location comprises, said method further comprising the steps of:
capturing multiple directional audio sources;
mixing said multiple directional audio sources based upon said selected viewport to create a mixed audio stream;
transmitting said audio stream to said local receiver; and
generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

50. The method of presenting images from a remote location as claimed in claim 46, said method further comprising the steps of:
transmitting at least one command from said local receiver to said remote location; and
selecting said viewport dependent upon said command.

51. A camera apparatus, said camera apparatus comprising:
a panoramic camera for capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
a computer for geometrically transforming said digitized annular representation into a rectangular representation of said panorama, said computer selecting a viewport from said rectangular representation of said panorama;
a communication device for transmitting said viewport from said rectangular representation of said panorama to a local receiver; and
a local receiver for receiving said viewport and displaying said viewport.

52. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 51, said camera apparatus further comprising:
at least one microphone for capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location, said audio stream transmitted to said local receiver; and
audio generator for generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

53. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 51, said camera apparatus further comprising:
at least two microphones at said remote location for capturing multiple audio sources;
a mixer at said remote location, said mixer combining said multiple audio sources into a mixed audio stream, said mixed audio stream transmitted to said local receiver; and
audio generator for generating audio at said local receiver based upon said mixed audio stream.

54. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 53 wherein said mixer mixes said multiple audio sources based upon said selected viewport.

55. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 51 wherein said local receiver transmits at least one command to said computer to indicate a desired viewport.

56. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 51 wherein said communication device continuously transmits viewports such that a motion image is displayed at said local receiver.

57. A camera apparatus, said camera apparatus comprising:
a panoramic camera for capturing a digitized annular representation of a panorama at said remote location;
a computer for selecting a viewport from said digitized annular representation of said panorama, said computer geometrically transforming said digitized viewport into a rectangular representation of said panorama;
a communication device for transmitting said viewport from said rectangular representation of said panorama to a local receiver; and
a local receiver for receiving said viewport and displaying said viewport.

58. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 57, said camera apparatus further comprising:
at least one microphone for capturing at least one audio stream at said remote location, said audio stream transmitted to said local receiver; and
audio generator for generating audio at said local receiver using said audio stream.

59. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 57, said camera apparatus further comprising:
at least two microphones at said remote location for capturing multiple audio sources;
a mixer at said remote location, said mixer combining said multiple audio sources into a mixed audio stream, said mixed audio stream transmitted to said local receiver; and

audio generator for generating audio at said local receiver based upon said mixed audio stream.

60. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 59 wherein said mixer mixes said multiple audio sources based upon said selected viewport.

61. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 57 wherein said local receiver transmits at least one command to said computer to indicate a desired viewport.

62. The camera apparatus as claimed in claim 57 wherein said communication device continuously transmits viewports such that a motion image is displayed at said local receiver.

1/20

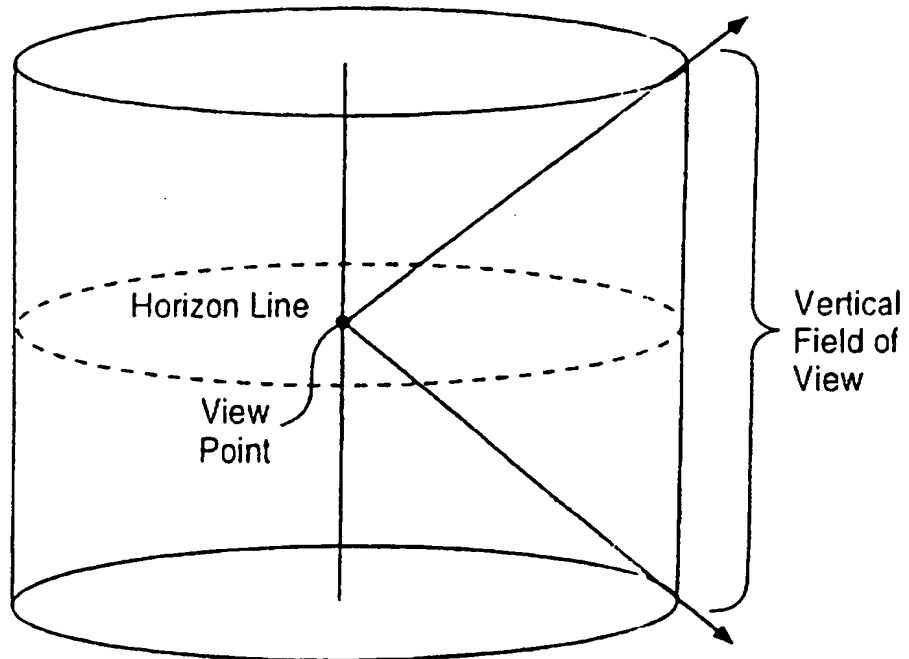


FIG. 1

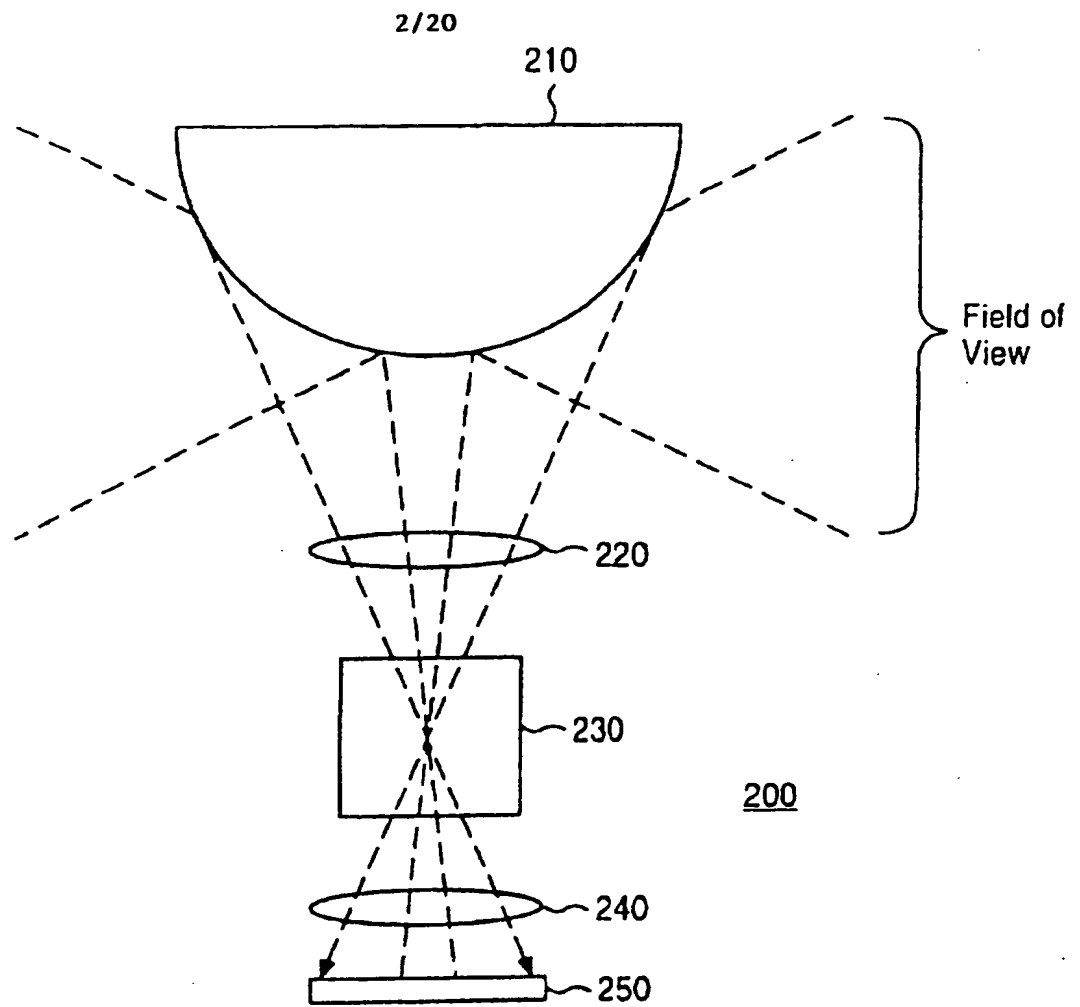


FIG. 2A

3/20

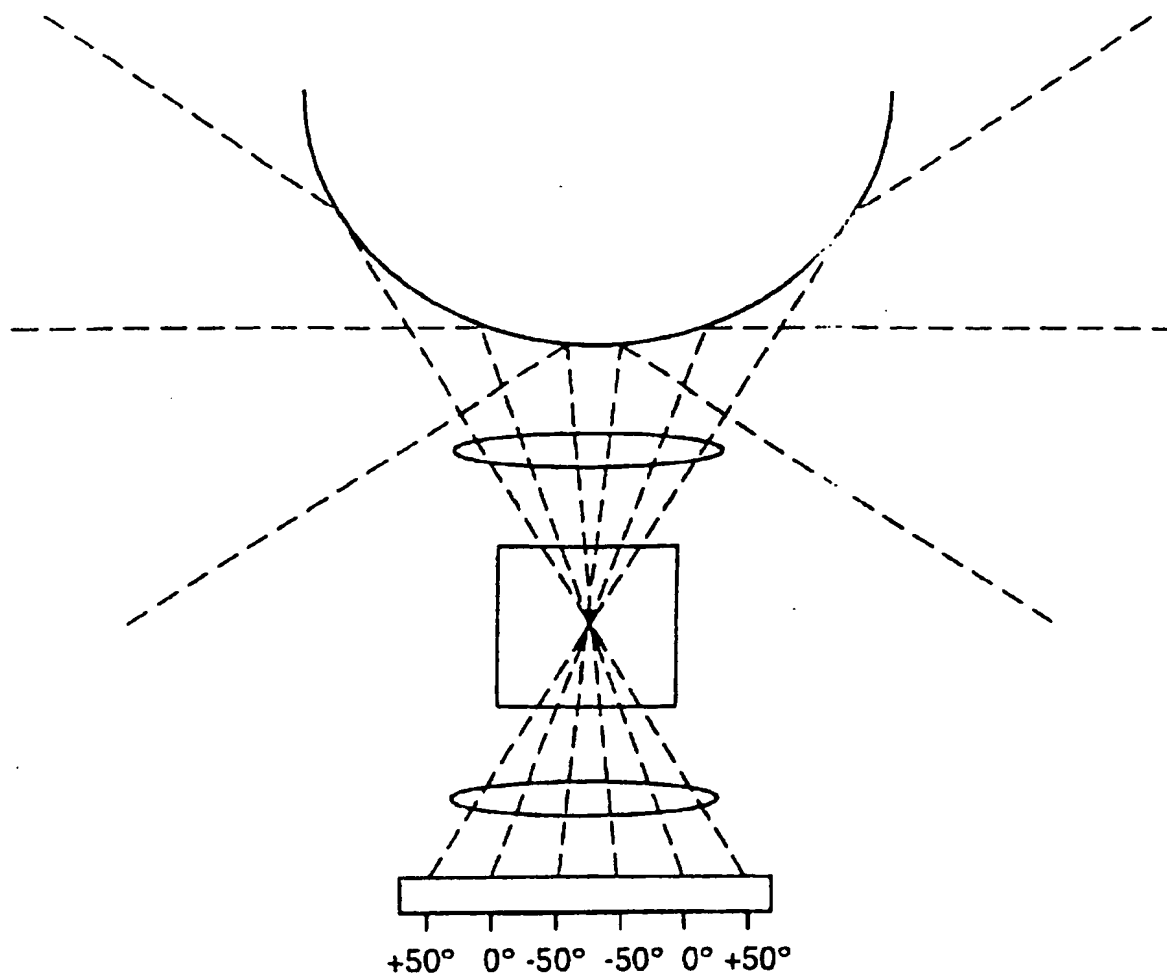


FIG. 2B

4/20

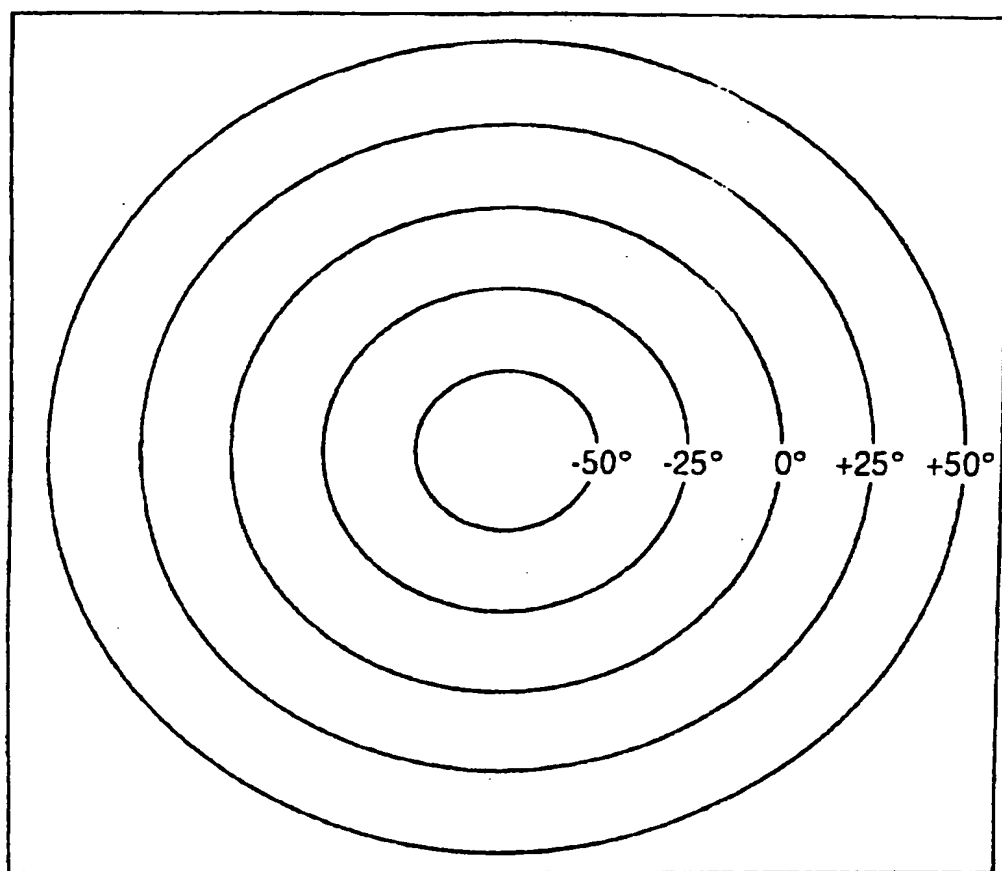


FIG. 2C

5/20

FIG. 3A

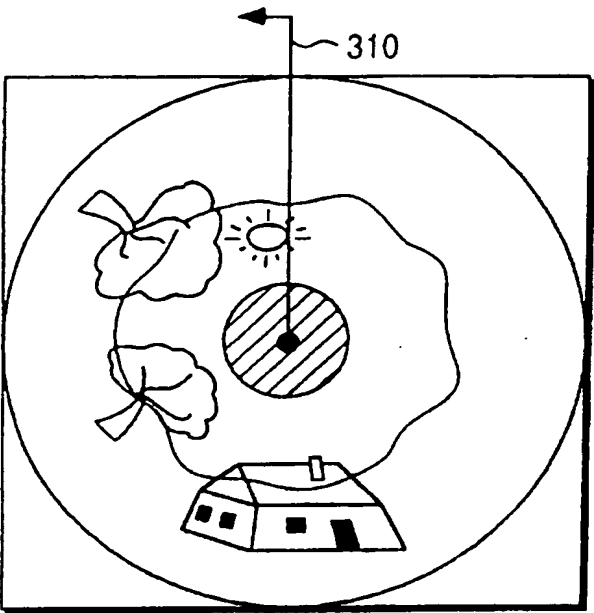
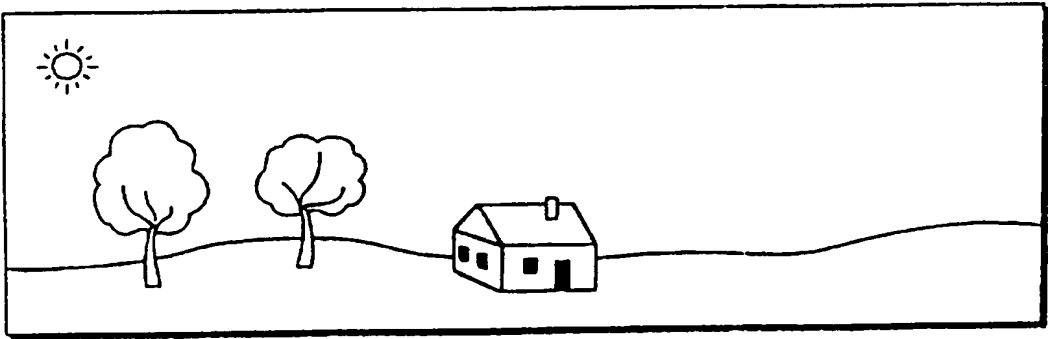


FIG. 3B



6/20

FIG. 4A

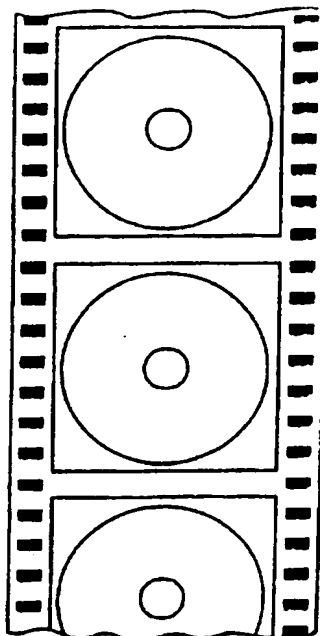
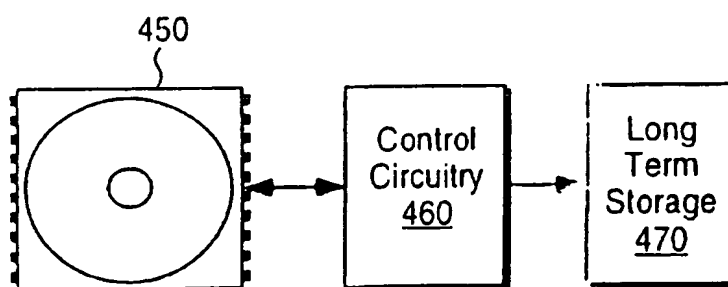


FIG. 4B



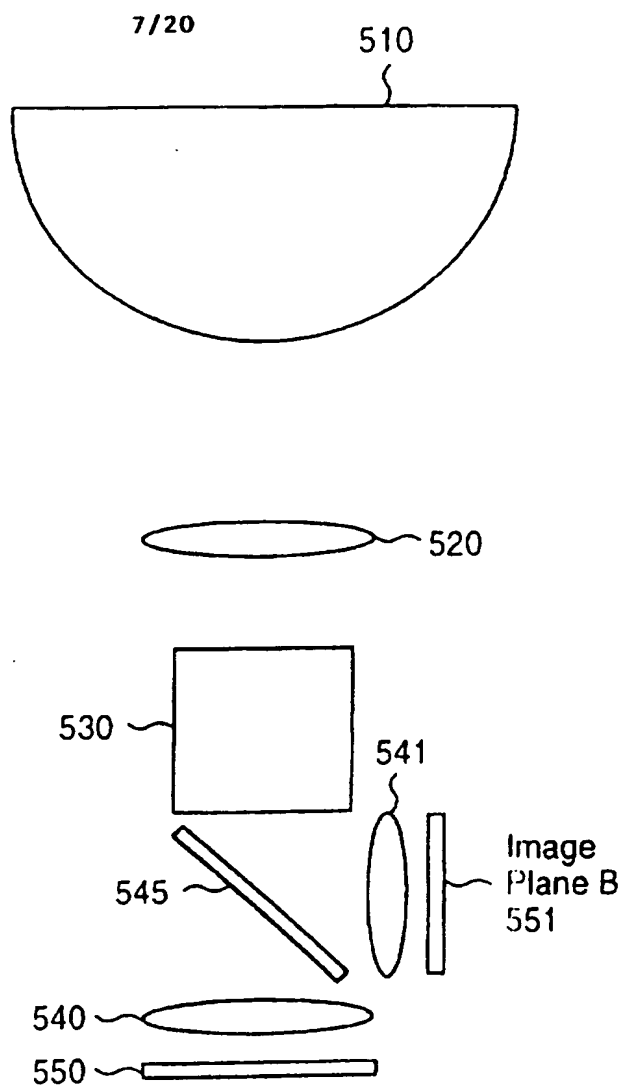


FIG. 5

8/20

FIG. 6A

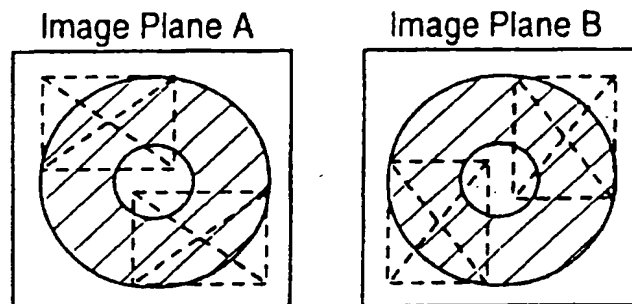
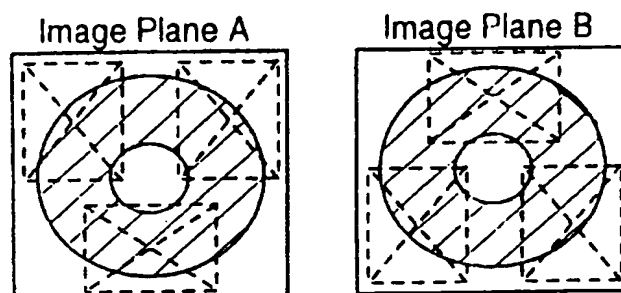


FIG. 6B



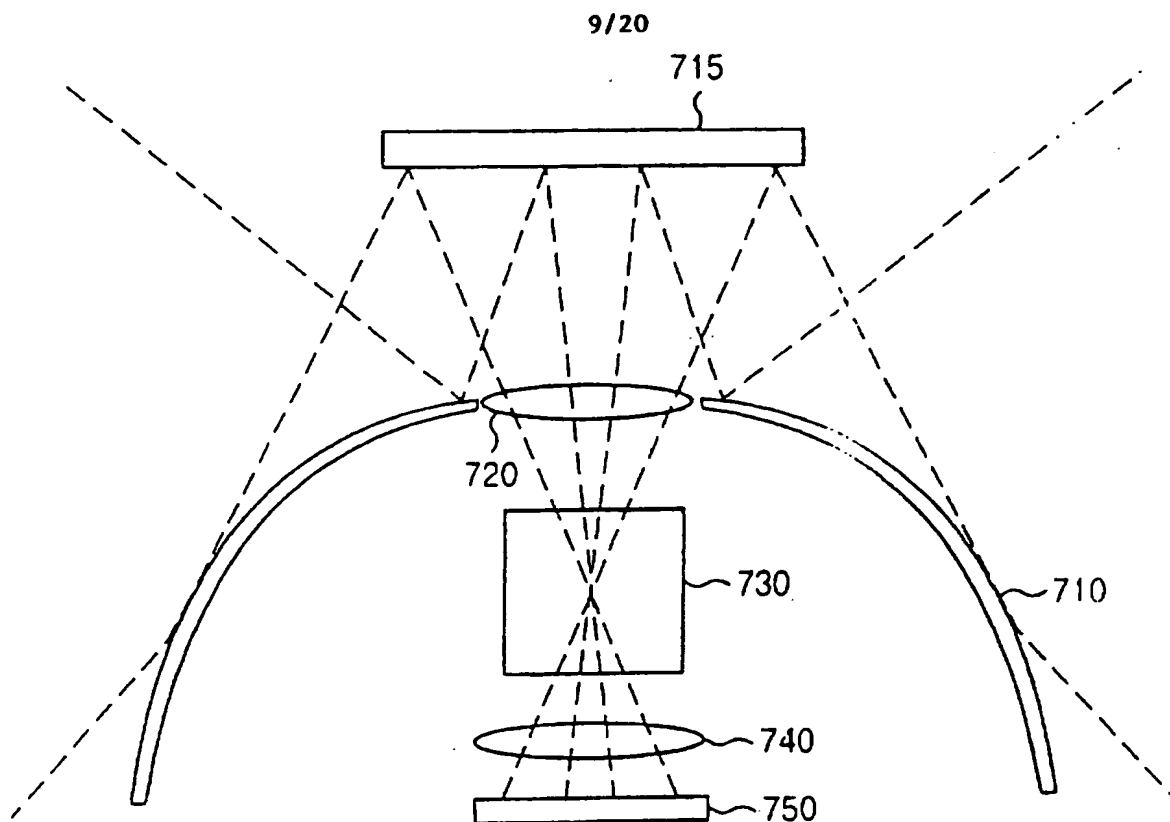


FIG. 7

10/20

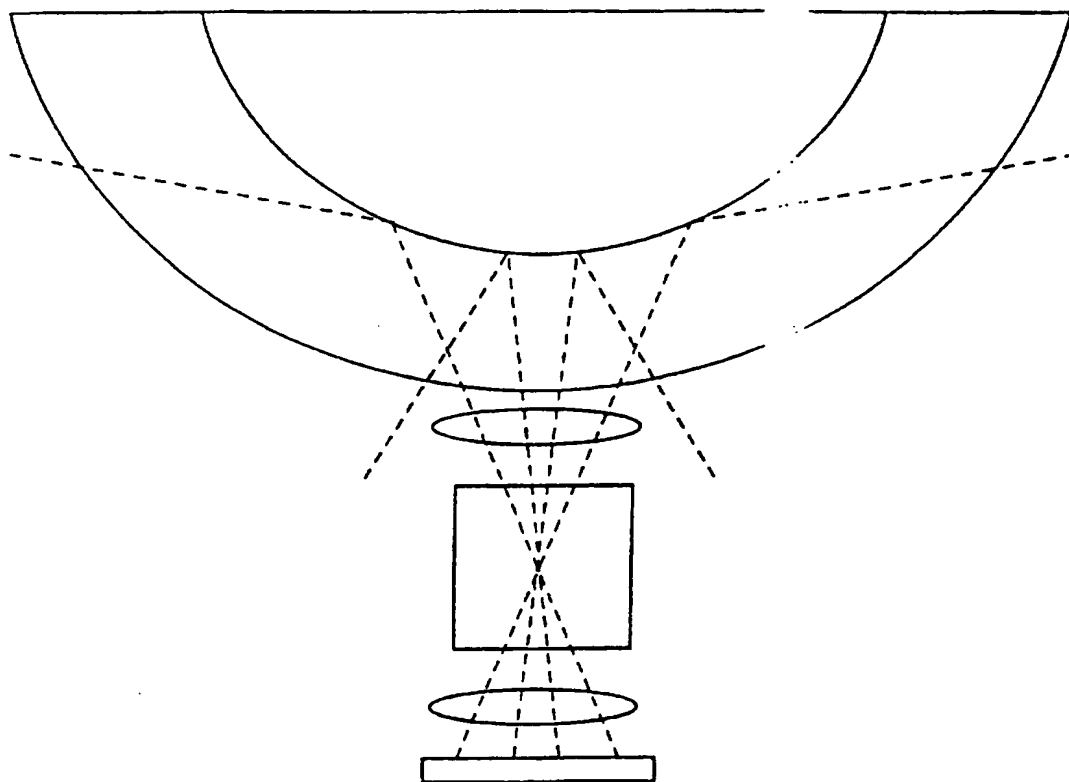


FIG. 8A

11/20

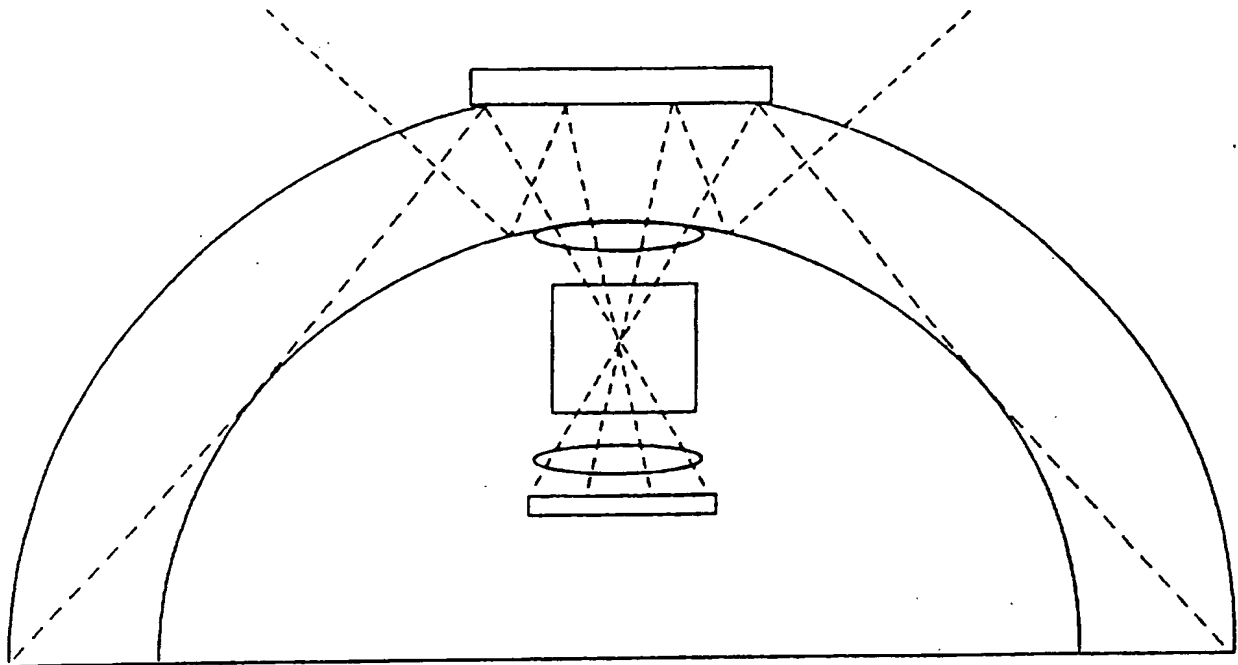


FIG. 8B

12/20

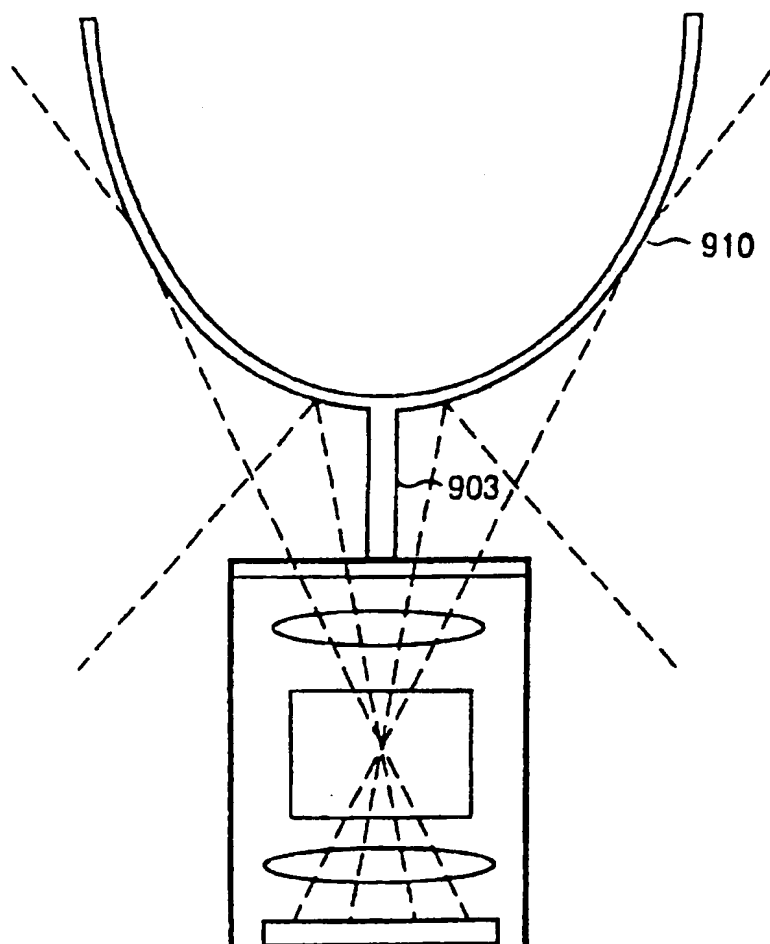


FIG. 9A

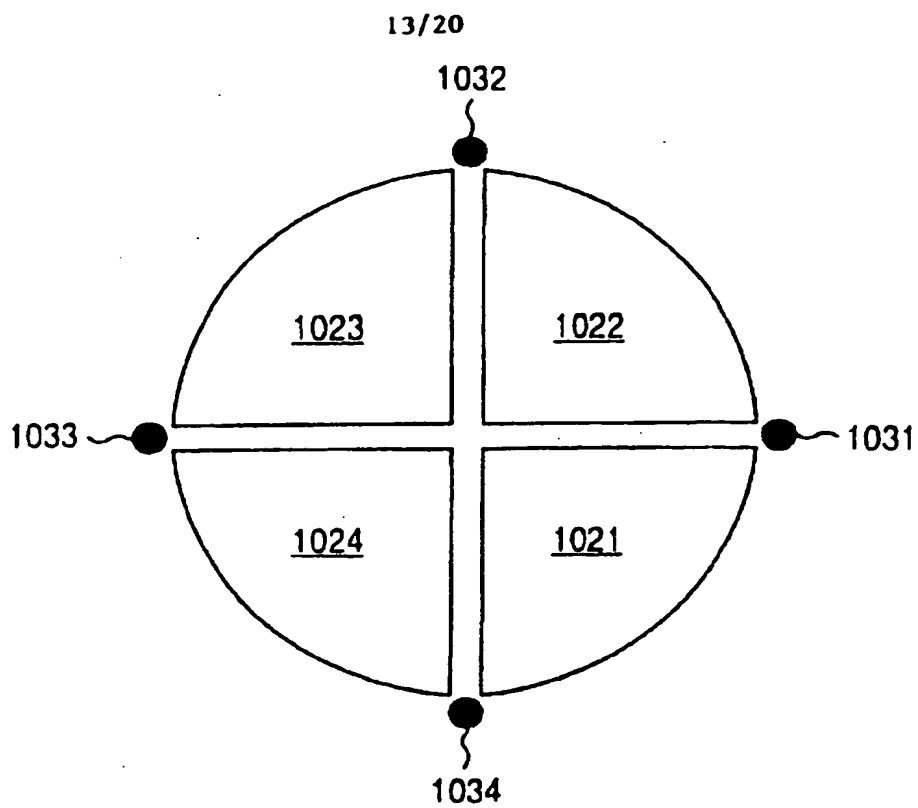
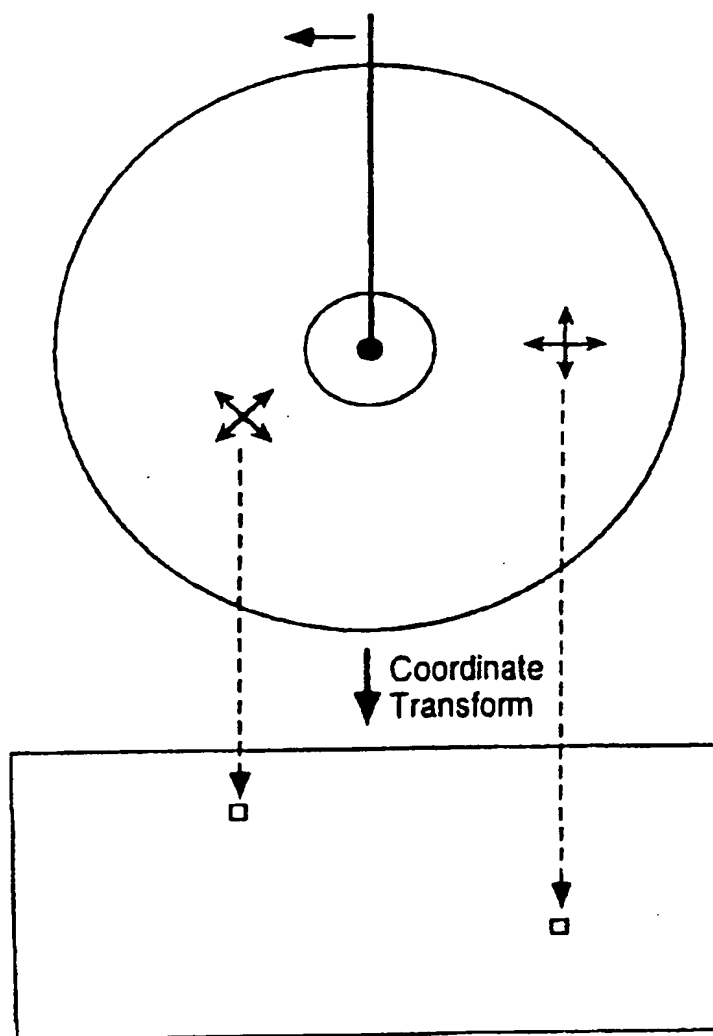


FIG. 9B

14/20

FIG. 10



15/20

FIG. 11A

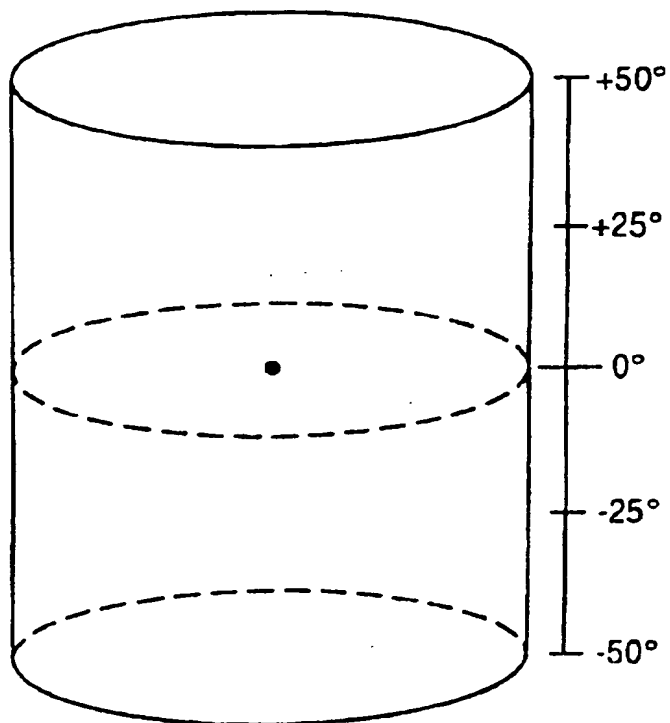
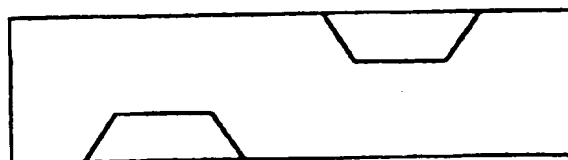
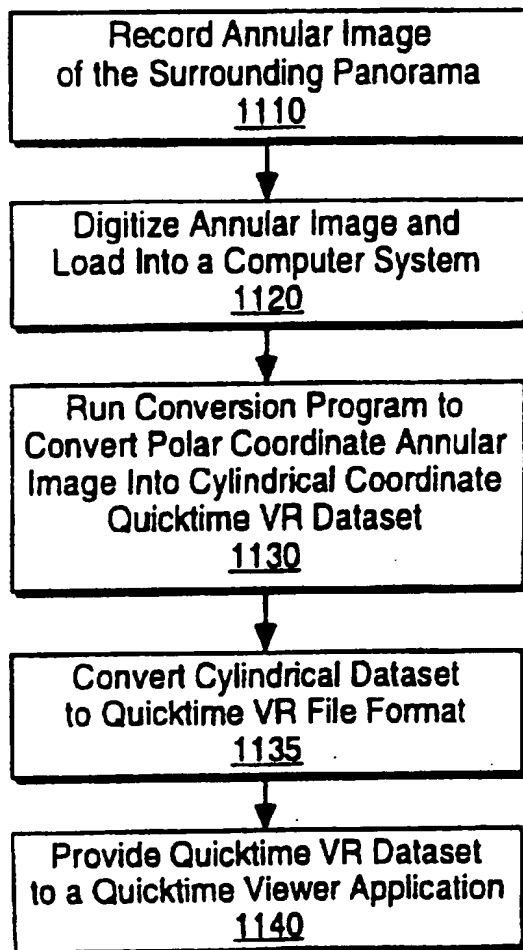


FIG. 11B



16/20

FIG. 11C

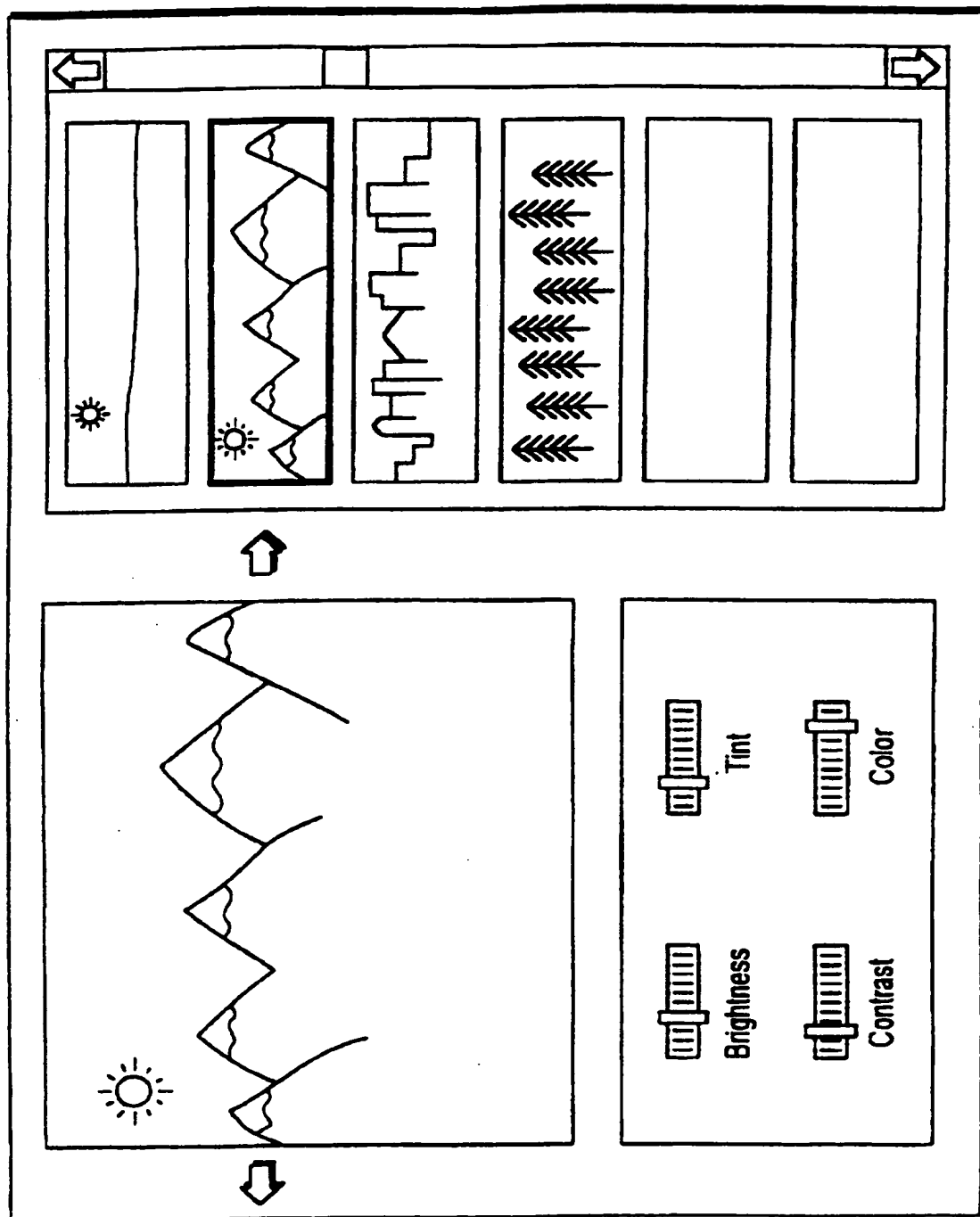


FIG. 12A

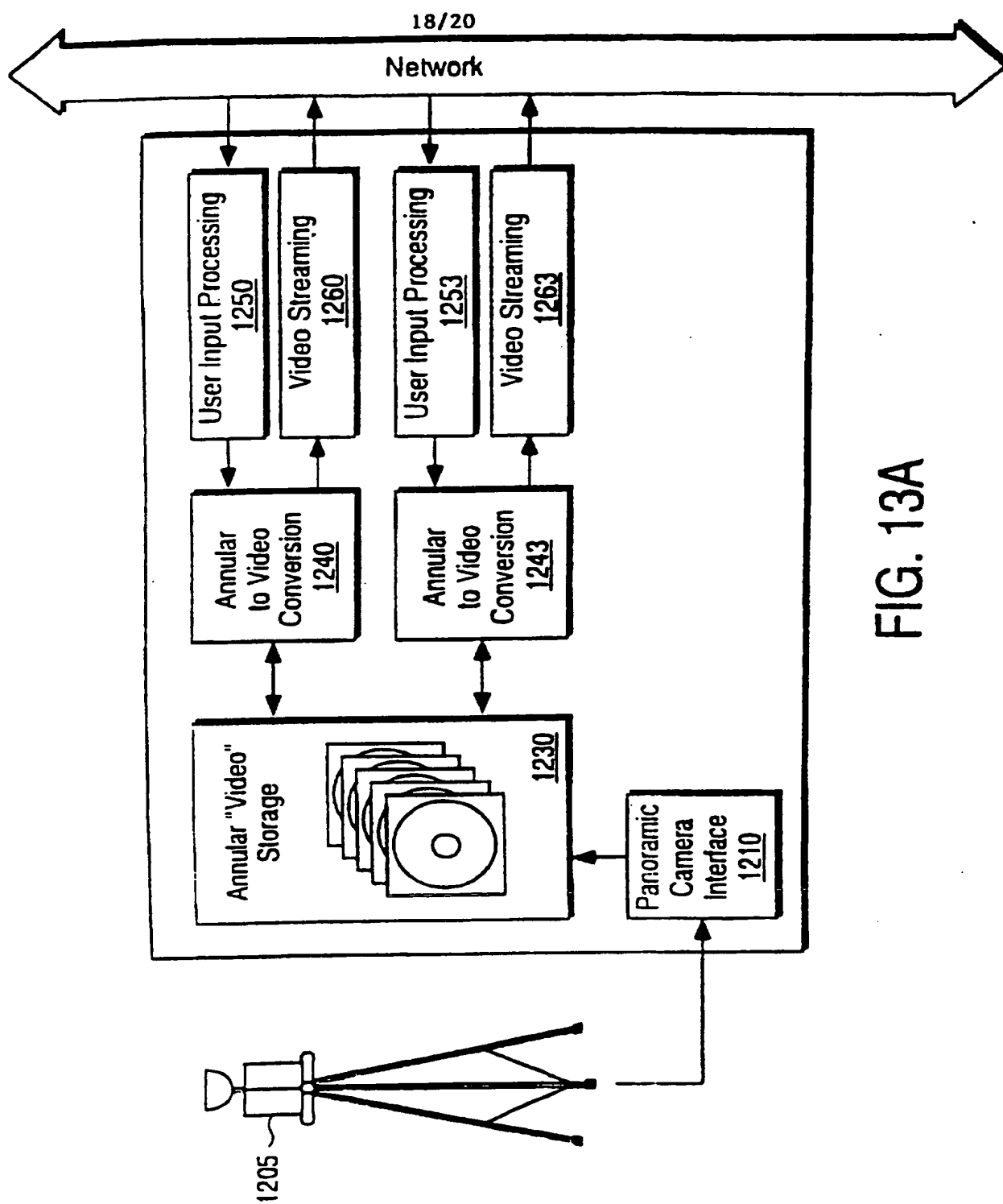


FIG. 13A

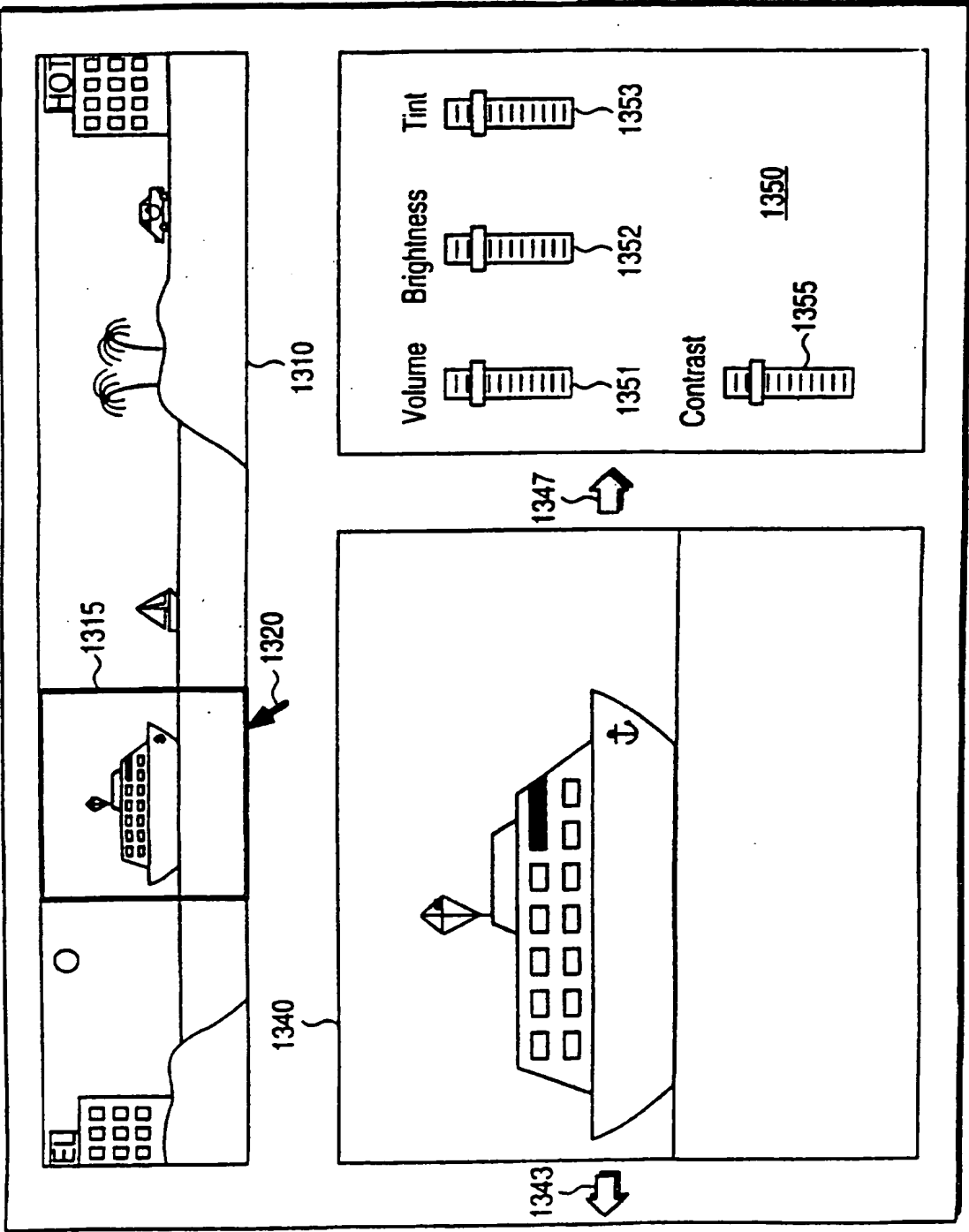


FIG. 13b

20/20

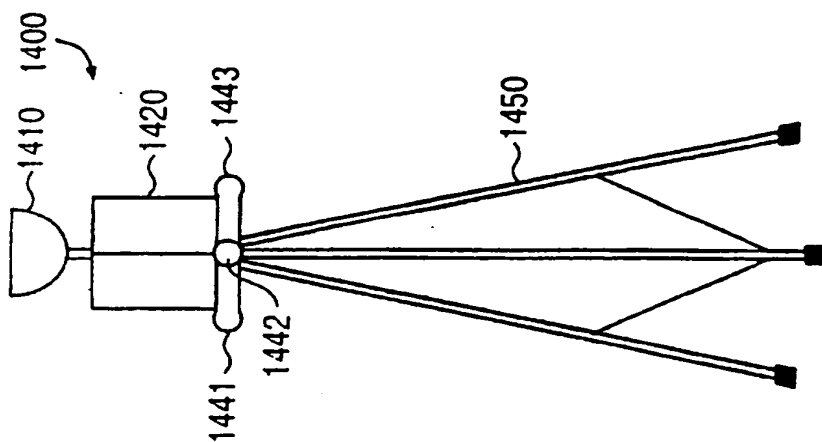


FIG. 14A

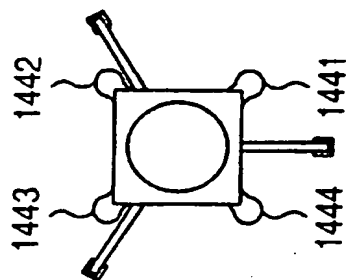


FIG. 14B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US97/09313

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :H04N 7/18

US CL :348/36

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 348/36, 64; 359/366, 724, 725

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,115,266 A (TROJE) 19 May 1992, figs. 1-3; col. 5, lines 6-68 ; col. 7, lines 14-42.	1-28
Y,P	US 5,631,778 A (POWELL) 20 May 1997, figs. 1-3; col. 3, lines 1-62.	1-28
A,P	US 5,627,675 A (DAVIS ET AL) 06 May 1997, fig. 1; col. 4, lines 50-67; col. 5, lines 23-67.	1-28
A,P	US 5,563,650 A (POELSTRA) 08 October 1996, figs. 1-2; col. 3, lines 17-67; col. 4, lines 1-25.	1-62
A,P	US 5,539,483 A (NALWA) 23 July 1996, fig. 12; col. 8, lines 11-33.	29-62

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X*	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
E earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y*	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*A*	document member of the same patent family
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search

03 SEPTEMBER 1997

Date of mailing of the international search report

30 OCT 1997

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TOMMY CHIN

Telephone No. (703) 305-4715

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US97/09313

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 3,846,809 A (PINZONE ET AL) 05 November 1974, figs. 1-3; col. 2, lines 23-56.	1-28
Y	US 3,203,328 A (BRUEGGEMANN) 31 August 1965, figs. 2-3; col. 3, lines 40-75; col. 4, lines 1-75.	1-28
Y	US 3,229,576 A (REES) 18 January 1966, fig. 2; col. 2, lines 1-69.	1-28
A	US 5,083,389 A (ALPERIN) 28 January 1992, figs. 1 and 5.	1-28
Y	US 5,508,734 A (BAKER ET AL) 16 April 1996, figs. 3a-4a, 5-6; col. 9, lines 15-67; col. 10, lines 30-67; col. 11, lines 1-37.	1-62

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US97/09313

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This international report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

Please See Extra Sheet.

1. ☒ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US97/09313

BOX II. OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION WAS LACKING

This ISA found multiple inventions as follows:

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be searched, the appropriate additional search fees must be paid.

Group 1, claim(s) 1-28, drawn to a panoramic camera system, which is classified in US class 348, subclass 36.
Group 2, claim(s) 29-62, drawn to a panoramic camera system, particularly dealing with image processing and display, which is classified in US class 348, subclass, 222.

The inventions listed as Groups 1 and 2 do not relate to a single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons:
the special technical features of group 1, which deal with optical means and method steps of generating panoramic images are not the same or similar to the special technical features of group 2, which deal with image processing and display of panoramic images obtained from an image sensor.